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ABSTRACT

This annual journal offers research articles, a teaching forum, and announcements on Celtic language learning. The publication's mission is to provide a forum where teachers and applied linguists can contribute to the literature presently available on second language acquisition as well as increase communication among Celtic language teachers and researchers. Articles included are: "Journal Writing as a Method of Student Motivation in Irish Language Class" (Roslyn Blyn); "Dialects, Speech Communities, and Applied Linguistics: A Realistic Approach to the Teaching of Irish in Non-Irish Speaking Areas" (James J. Duran); "CALL With Methodical Explanations" (Annette McElligott and Gearoid O Neill); and "Teaching Speaking in Celtic Languages" (Zev bar-Lev). A listing of materials received concerning Celtic language is included along with a listing of conferences, workshops, and rules for article submissions. (Contains article references.) (NAV)

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NAACLT is a non-profit professional organization bringing together Celtic language teachers and researchers in Canada and the United States. The association wishes to enable its members to contribute to the greater field of second/foreign language learning through conference participation and publications.

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Journal of Celtic Language Learning
Volume 1 1995

Contents

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Journal Writing as a Method of Student Motivation in Irish Language Class
Roslyn Blyn.....4

Dialects, Speech Communities, and Applied Linguistics: A Realistic Approach to the Teaching of Irish in Non-Irish Speaking Areas
James J. Duran.....21

CALL with Methodical Explanations
Annette McElligott and Gearóid Ó Néill.....38

TEACHING FORUM

Teaching Speaking in Celtic Languages
Zev bar-Lev.....53

MATERIALS RECEIVED.....55

ANNOUNCEMENTS.....56

Journal of Celtic Language Learning

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Journal of Celtic Language Learning is an international review for researchers and teachers of modern Celtic Languages. The official publication of the North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers, ***JCLL*** includes papers presented at the association's annual conference in addition to manuscripts submitted by Celtic language scholars world-wide. It is also a forum in which Celtic language teachers can share insights into methodology with their peers.

JCLL's mission, similar to that of NAACLT, is to provide another forum in which teachers and applied linguists can contribute to the literature presently available on second language acquisition as well as increase communication among Celtic language teachers and researchers.

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JOURNAL OF CELTIC LANGUAGE LEARNING, 1, 4-20 (1995)

Journal Writing as a Method of Student Motivation in Irish Language Class

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This article begins with a description of a journal writing assignment given in a first-year university class in Irish. Three sample journal entries are analyzed for grammar, vocabulary, and style. In each case salient errors are identified and the journals are related to the students' overall performance. The pros and cons of using creative projects as part of elementary classwork are discussed. Finally, recommendations are made for teachers considering the use of journal writing as a motivational method.

Although there is abundant literature on first-language (L1) journal writing (Elbow 1973, Elbow 1981, Shuman 1981, Sullivan and van Becker 1982, to name just a few), and ample literature on second-language (L2) writing when L2 is a widely studied language such as English, Spanish, or French (Connor and Kaplan 1987, Heald-Taylor 1989, Johns 1986, Kroll 1990, Raimes 1987, Zamel 1983), there is considerably less information available on writing by students learning those languages variously described as "minority languages" (cf. Crystal 1994), "less commonly taught languages" (a widely used term endorsed by the Penn Language Center, where the class under analysis was taught) or "lesser used languages" (the term used in the official name of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages). These terms are fraught with ambiguity and contradiction and reflect an insider/outsider bias regarding the language. This issue cannot be addressed here in sufficient depth to do it justice; it will perhaps suffice to say that Irish is a "native minority" language within its home country

where it may be "lesser used" but, as a required subject in the Republic of Ireland's school curriculum, is not "less commonly taught." In the United States, Irish can be described as an "immigrant" minority language which is both "lesser used" and "less commonly taught." Among the few research endeavors which do address the use of journal writing in less commonly taught languages in the United States are those concerning Hungarian by Gedeon (1993) and Harlig (1993), which partially inspired this author's research on the topic as it pertains to Irish.

This "minority language" category includes Irish, a language whose population of active native speakers in Irish-speaking communities has been reported as having declined to as low as 8,751 (Hindley 1990: 250) while its population of at least nominally proficient speakers (native and second-language) has been reported at the high figure of 1,095,830 in preliminary figures for 1991 by the Irish government (Breathnach 1994). The latter statistic is generally considered unreliable in that it includes many schoolchildren, who may be very ambivalent about the language and who are assessed for the census by their parents. Conservative, but not unduly pessimistic, estimates for the mid-to-late twentieth century onwards generally range from 30,000 to 120,000 (Blyn 1991; Crystal 1987; Grimes: 1992). Although interest in the language is growing among Irish-Americans (Ihde 1994a), there is no cohesive Irish-speaking diaspora in the United States. According to Ihde (1994b), there are few accredited Irish language courses being taught in the United States. Many of the courses which do exist are community-focused, often unaccredited, and do not assign homework, even for basic grammar drill, not to mention requiring an added component such as journal writing. Therefore, there is virtually no published information available on journal writing in Irish in American university classrooms.

THE 1994-95 ELEMENTARY IRISH LANGUAGE CLASS: AN OVERVIEW

Before proceeding with the journal-writing analysis, a description of the class will be provided to set the assignment in context. Accredited Irish classes were started at the University in 1990 as an initiative of the Penn Language Center, which sponsors the teaching of approximately fifty less commonly taught languages. The course continues for two years, at the elementary and intermediate levels, and it fulfills the University's language requirement, a fact which is very important to most of the undergraduates in the class. The class meets for 4 1/2 hours a week.

All of the ten students were beginners to Irish, although one had had minimal exposure to the language in school as a child during the year his family spent in Ireland. All were at least partially Irish-American, and most were taking the course as an elective and/or for personal enrichment, not part of a major such as Irish Studies or Celtic Studies, neither of which is available at the University. One freshman planned to continue in Celtic Studies for graduate work but wanted a broader liberal arts background for her undergraduate work.

All of the students had previously studied second languages, as this is required for admission to the University; most had studied Romance languages, particularly Spanish. In most cases however, their prior language-learning experience had not motivated them to choose language-oriented majors. In a class survey, they reported career plans and majors in fields such as biology, engineering, finance, psychology and social work. Irish was clearly an elective interest for all except the one future Celticist.

The journal-writing assignment was added to the course in an attempt to personalize the students' language learning experience and enhance the students' motivation to learn material which otherwise may seem uninteresting to them at times, such as verb conjugations or noun declensions.

The cultural differences presented in Irish pedagogical materials, whether they represent contemporary Gaeltacht life, the urban revival, or folklore retold, make it difficult for American college-age students to juxtapose learning Irish with their own life experience.

The proficiency goals in this class were in four areas: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Other methods used in class were grammar exercises, dictation, reading short fiction passages, conversations, and student presentations in Irish. Student attendance at Irish events was strongly encouraged and the class as a group attended an Irish play and movie, which though in English, provided the basis for discussion of Hiberno-English idiom as a vehicle for understanding Irish. Assessment was based primarily on homework, quizzes, tests, and class participation. Completion of the journal and presentation of one week's entry to the class counted for 5% of the course grade; journal entries were not graded though they were corrected and received commentary.

THE JOURNAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT

At the beginning of the semester, students were instructed to write approximately five sentences weekly, describing scenes or activities, or any other subjects which they chose. They were to use about five new words for each entry, to be found in the *Foclóir Póca*. New words were to be listed at the bottom of each entry, with gender. The instructor suggested that students rely mainly on nouns for their new words, since new verbs, other than verbal nouns, would be difficult to use correctly at the beginning stages of learning the language. The last day of class was devoted to students' oral presentations of previous or newly written journal entries. The presentations were graded, not so much on correctness as on preparation, delivery, and the students' familiarity with their own material.

All students signed release forms indicating their awareness of the study and that they would be identified by

pseudonyms; unless otherwise stated, the students are all of traditional college age. Journal entries are printed below as submitted; all translations are by the author of this article.

JOURNAL SAMPLES

The first student, Seán, had a slight advantage over the others in that he had spent one year of his elementary education in Ireland and had studied Irish in school there, although Irish was not the family language. Seán's family is very much in touch with its Irish roots, and his father recorded for the instructor an informal session of reminisences which demonstrate a vivid memory of the idiom spoken by the older generation of his family, including Hiberno-English and even a few Irish phrases.

At the beginning of the year, Seán claimed not to remember any of the language except answering "tá" ("yes") to questions and a few phrases. As the semester progressed, it was clear that some underlying memories were coming through. Of all the students, Seán seemed most able to express his thoughts in natural Irish word order and to incorporate new grammatical structures or irregular forms into an underlyingly Irish framework. Other students, in contrast, would often regress slightly as new and difficult forms were learned; they would abandon recently learned grammatical forms, vocabulary, spelling, or word order in favor of an English framework, as they attempted to use new structures.

The following entry describes Seán's visit home over the Thanksgiving break:

> Dé Céadaoin chuaigh mé abhaile. D'ith mé turcaí agus píog úll. D'ól mé leann dubh, pórtar, agus poitín. Deirim ráiméis cathain ólaim pórtar. Cathain ní ólaim pórtar, tá tart orm. Dé hAoine, bhí tart orm, agus d'ól mé leann dubh. Dé Sathaim, imeoidh mé arís.

> Rachaidh mé Washington D.C. Pósfaidh mo chol seisir. Ní ólfaidh mé pórtar. Ólfaidh mé seaimpéin.
>
> Wednesday I went home. I ate turkey and apple pie. I drank ale, porter, and poteen. I say nonsense when I drink porter. When I don't drink porter, I am thirsty. Friday I was thirsty and I drank ale. Saturday I will go away again. I will go to Washington D.C. My second cousin will get married. I will not drink porter. I will drink champagne.

Despite some awkward or incorrect usages, the text flows well and can be corrected with little difficulty. The most obvious mistake, the omission of the relative "when" (**nuair a**) had not been covered yet in class. Seán had apparently tried to use this based on the dictionary entry for "when" in *Foclóir Póca*. Even if the relative "when" had been covered by this time in class, that is no guarantee that the student would have used the correct form. Of the students in this class, only those who had studied German had prior knowledge of the grammatical difference between the relative "when" and the interrogative "when."

The second entry is by an older, non-traditional student, Séamus, who had frequently visited Ireland and who remembered some Irish phrases and Hiberno-English idioms used by his relatives. His writings included some deliberate use of humor, such as a recaptioning in Irish of one of Gary Larson's "Far Side" cartoons, with a result that Larson's famous cows were drinking Guinness and grumbling about the farmer in Irish. This work was presented orally in class and clearly achieved Séamus' desired result of making the class laugh heartily. Sometimes Séamus' use of humor was effective, despite grammar mistakes; other times, his intentions were less clear, as the following example shows:

> Tá seanchat ag Brian agus Nóra, ach tá sé caite. Tá a cóta salach agus stróicthe, agus ní féidir leis ag rith ar chor ar bith. Tá siad ag dul isteach sa chathair agus ceannóidh siad cat nua. Is féidir le cat ag canadh agus ag rince. Tá Brian agus Nóra daoine aisteach.
>
> Brian and Nora have an old cat, but he is worn out. His coat is dirty and torn and he can not run at all (literally "he is unable at running.") They are going into the city and they will buy a new cat. A cat can sing and dance (literally, "A cat is able at singing and dancing.") Brian and Nora are strange people.

This journal entry not only contains some common grammatical mistakes but also may give the reader, as it did this author, an unsettling feeling regarding who is actually "aisteach" ("strange") and the proper care of pets. Brian and Nora are described as "strange" but the unusual singing and dancing cat is not! The grammar mistakes reveal a tendency to adhere to verbal forms learned first, even when instructed to change them for certain purposes. For example, the preposition "ag" ("at") is incorrectly retained followed the construction "is féidir leis" ("he is able"), although the correct usage had been taught. Lenition was not applied following the masculine possessive adjective "a" ("his"), although this had also been taught. The incorrect use of "tá" ("is") in a sentence with a predicate subject is more understandable since this structure had not been formally taught yet in class; the class had however been warned to avoid such constructions.

Séamus, like many older students who have been in the Irish classes at Penn, is very diligent and thorough in studying the language. His grades are often very high, as long as the material being graded can be learned by memorization or by applying rules. Unlike some of the younger students,

however, his basic grammar suffers in his creative applications of the language.

The third sample, by Máire, the future Celticist, was a recipe for flummery, a sweet oatmeal desert. The text of her recipe follows:

> Flummery, an t-oideas:
>
> Cuir min choirce sa mias thanalacht. Nigh le uisce fuar agus fan an lá. Nigh le fionnuisce. Cuir min choirce, le fionnuisce, sa sáspan agus cócaráil. Doirt sa mias. Ith le siúcra agus fion, leann, nó ceirtlis.
>
> Flummery, the recipe:
>
> Put the oatmeal in the shallow dish. Wash with cold water and wait a day. Wash with fresh water. Put oatmeal, with fresh water, in the saucepan and cook. Pour in the dish. Eat with sugar and wine, ale, or cider.

Máire made good use of the imperative mood of the verbs, which was emphasized early in the course. In this she efficiently related the grammatical structure learned in class to a natural context, such as a recipe, in which the structure would occur. Of the two major mistakes, one could have been avoided with closer attention to parts of speech as listed in the dictionary; the other was almost unavoidable based on the material covered up to this point in the class. The use of the noun "tanalacht" ("thinness" "shallowness") in an adjective position is a result of incorrect dictionary use, usually manifested in student journals by assuming that the first form of a word listed is the one desired; students had been advised to use caution in selecting the exact form of the word they wanted to use. Máire did however correctly apply lenition to the word she thought was an adjective, as the students had

learned to do with feminine singular nouns. The second critical error is the omission of the "h" usually prefixed to nouns beginning with vowels which follow the preposition "le." This detail of usage had not been taught yet and could not have been predicted by a student at this level.

Stylistically, the entry shows some awkwardness, but not enough to interfere with the meaning. In researching and translating this recipe for flummery, a food item originally from Wales and very rarely encountered in the United States, this student demonstrated both a good intuitive sense for language learning and a disciplined approach to studying. Translating a recipe is an effective context for language instruction (Gambhir 1994-95, personal communication) since recipes generally contain the imperative mood, numbers and measurements, and a variety of ingredient names. By using a recipe for her submission, this student showed both an interest in the culture beyond the immediate classroom and a practical application of recently acquired knowledge. In other submissions, she translated a song by Enya and a short poem by Ursula K. LeGuin, going far beyond the requirements of the assignment as given.

PROS AND CONS OF JOURNAL WRITING IN IRISH CLASS

Journal writing clearly benefits students in that it enables them to apply and experiment with learned structures in a non-graded context. The journal writing experience should be less stressful and more personally rewarding than the usual contexts in which students demonstrate their knowledge (graded homework, tests, oral performance). Results of a course evaluation which included questions on journal writing are given below and indicate a favorable response to the assignment; this course evaluation was administered by the instructor and is distinct from the University's standardized, computer-coded course evaluation.

The potential disadvantage is that the openness and flexibility of the assignment leads to a high rate of errors or

Anglicisms. Correction of these may prove discouraging to students, unless overlaid with some form of praise. Older, non-traditional students frequently show greater difficulty in accepting criticism, because their level of competence in their first language is so high; these learners are often well educated professionals studying the language out of interest in their Irish-American heritage. Ironically, the older students, although they may apply themselves diligently, often have the greatest difficulty absorbing the Irish idiom; consequently, their journals tend to show the greatest amount of interference from English. Students of traditional college age are still used to having their output constantly evaluated and corrected. And, also ironically, they are usually more receptive to new thought patterns and modes of expression; in fact, in some of them, the process seems effortless. Consequently, most of their journals read well, despite straightforward grammar mistakes which may be due to carelessness, inadequate preparation, or overly ambitious structures.

A pedagogical disadvantage results from the assignment of a non-graded project. Some students took the instructions too casually and ignored the teacher's warning about using new verbs or complicated new structures. If such actions detracted from a grade for the journals, students might be more careful about following instructions. On the other hand, grading, especially grading based not just on the output but also on how well the instructions were followed, could transform the one individualized component of the class work into a more strictly monitored, rigidly assessed chore, defeating its very purpose.

An anonymous survey yielded the following assessment by students of the journal writing project. The survey consisted of statements with which students could agree or disagree, on a scale of 1 to 10, with "1" representing least agreement and "10" representing very strong agreement. In the review below, "5" is considered agreement, "8" and "9" are strong agreement, and "10" is very strong agreement:

"Writing journals was fun": 60% agreed, with 66% of these agreeing strongly.

"Writing journals was helpful": 90% agreed, with 44% of these agreeing strongly and 11% agreeing very strongly.

"Instructor's comments were helpful": with the exception of one student who did not respond to this statement, all agreed, with 60% agreeing strongly and 10% very strongly.

"Instructor's comments were encouraging": with the exception of one student who did not respond to this statement, all agreed, with 50% agreeing strongly and 10% very strongly.

"Journals were a positive means of creative expression": 90% agreed, with 40% agreeing strongly and 10% very strongly.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INSTRUCTORS CONSIDERING JOURNAL ASSIGNMENTS

1) Students should write about topics with which they are familiar and which they enjoy.

2) Students should avoid humor unless they are sure they can recreate the appropriate punchline or humorous effect.

3) Initially, students should emphasize nouns and adjectives in their selection of new vocabulary; they should avoid verbs unless they believe they can generate the correct conjugated forms.

4) Students should familiarize themselves with the abbreviations used in their dictionary and make sure they understand what part of speech is listed.

5) Students should double-check any word they find in the English-Irish section of the dictionary with the same word in the

Irish-English section, being alert to any inconsistencies with their intended meaning. Further aids such as grammar handbooks, for both Irish and also for English, should also be consulted; most students observed in five years of teaching Irish at the University have little understanding of the standard English grammatical terms used to explain Irish grammar (such as "conditional," "mood," "predicate," "case," or "indefinite").

6) Students should be advised from the beginning that journal writing almost inevitably leads to technical errors as well as stylistic problems. They should be prepared to see these corrected and not be discouraged. They should be encouraged to work with recently learned grammatical forms. A balance must be struck between giving the students this one creative outlet and helping them choose material they can work with efficiently; instructors might want to require that the journals for the week must include examples of the new forms covered in class, such as the past tense, or genitive case. Students should also be cautioned not to use sentences with predicate subjects (such as "I am a doctor") until that material has been covered in class; unless forewarned, students will assume they can use "tá" for such constructions.

7) Teachers may want to experiment with the amount of feedback they provide, balancing their personal inclination with the students' needs. Current theories on the appropriate amount of teacher feedback for compositions in L1, L2, and foreign languages vary greatly. Opinions range from no feedback (assuming the students learn to identify their own mistakes and learn subconsciously from them) to thorough feedback on grammar, vocabulary, content and style. A reasonable compromise would be a) to correct basic grammar errors, to help ensure that they do not resurface, b) to improve vocabulary choice, explaining that sometimes the dictionary meanings are inadequate or that Irish idiom requires a different basic pattern, and c) to provide as much positive feedback as

possible on content, so as to encourage the student. Even a brief note such as "suimiúil" ("interesting") or "greannmhar" ("humorous") or acknowledging how challenging the composition must have been can counterbalance the discouragement students may feel at seeing many corrections.

The time required to review journal entries varies tremendously according to the sophistication of the writer. The least time is required for works by students who follow the guidelines suggesting that they adhere to grammatical forms covered in class; these may take only a few minutes to review. Other students may be more creative and ambitious, or more careless, and thorough review of even a short passage full of mistakes and unnecessary or awkward anglicisms may take half an hour or more. A student in a different class from the one discussed here once asked for and received permission to submit as a journal entry a translation of a course description in her major field of study, constitutional theory; as one might expect, this required considerable attention not only to basic grammar and meaning but to the underlying implications of the words selected.

Teachers should carefully consider the time they can devote to reviewing the journals and what adjustments they can make to their workload. Journal writing is not a standard feature of second- language classes although its popularity as a pedagogical technique is growing. Therefore, it is unlikely that a university department would require teachers to include it; by including journals, teachers may in essence increase their workload by volunteering extra time beyond what is required of them.

In comparison to teachers of the world's major languages, such as Spanish or French, teachers of less commonly taught languages generally have greater autonomy and consequently greater responsibility for the material they choose to cover. Teachers of less commonly taught languages may have greater flexibility in adjusting their syllabi to incorporate journals than teachers of major languages. In addition, although the journal writing experience can be

valuable in any language, including one's first language, journals can be especially helpful when there is little surrounding linguistic context available to students.

Students of major languages can usually access their target language through many ways outside of class: news broadcasts (through the SCOLA channel), entertainment (video rentals, ethnic radio programs), reading material such as daily newspapers, popular magazines, and novels, ethnic or regional restaurants, church services, and in, some cases, family gatherings. This is usually more difficult to achieve with less commonly taught languages, and in the case of Irish, it would be almost impossible to assign or even suggest to students that they rent an Irish-language film from their local video store or speak Irish with the servers at the nearest Irish pub. In such cases, journal writing may provide at least some opportunity to use the language outside the classroom.

8) Teachers may want to suggest topics which they feel students can competently manipulate instead of leaving the content completely open.

9) Some students may prefer to record their journal entries and submit them on cassette. This method has the advantage of also demonstrating the student's pronunciation skills; however it makes quantitative assessment difficult and more time-consuming. This method was not used in the elementary Irish class but has been reported as successful by other instructors (Gambhir 1994-95, personal communication).

10) Teachers should obtain release forms from the students indicating that they understand that their work may be part of an analytic study, if this is intended.

Given the dearth of Irish language learning materials suitable for use in American classrooms, and the lack of interesting interactive tasks in those which do exist, teachers and students both may benefit from including journal writing in

the syllabus. With appropriate guidance to dictionary usage and reminders of grammatical boundaries, students can explore areas of personal or cultural interest while comfortably testing their grammar skills.

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Dialects, Speech Communities, and Applied Linguistics: A Realistic Approach to the Teaching of Irish in Non-Irish Speaking Areas

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An instructor, when asked to teach a modern language in a college or university, usually sets about teaching a standard variety of the language, that is, a variety of the language which is considered the dominant variety of a language which is not widely spoken, or else an important regional variety of a language which is spoken over a broad geographical area. Such varieties are usually closely tied to a written standard language, so that the vocabulary, grammatical system, and even the sound system of the spoken language are often reflected very directly in the written form of the language. The average speaker of the language may in fact play down any obvious differences between the spoken language and the written language, ascribing such differences to imperfect acquisition of the language. The codified, often idealized, written variety may thus come to be seen as "correct", "proper", or "educated" speech, while the spoken variety may be seen as "grammatically incorrect", "slovenly", "unpleasant" in its sounds, and characteristic of uneducated people. There may in fact be strong pressures on the instructor to adhere closely to the written standard, however idealized it may be, and however removed it may be from the speech of living people.

The problem is especially acute, perhaps, in the teaching of Modern Arabic. Here, very clearly, the instructor must carefully consider the needs of the students. Students

of contemporary culture in the Arab world cannot ignore the Holy Koran and the language in which it was written, Classical Arabic, a language which is anything but a "dead" language in the life of the Arab world. On the other hand, the student of current affairs will have to familiarize himself or herself with "Cairo newspaper standard" Arabic. If, furthermore, the student wishes to travel and live in a specific Arabic-speaking nation, that student must carefully select a regional dialect of spoken Arabic which may differ sharply from any form of written Arabic and from spoken dialects of all other regions.

To reduce the problem to its simplest dimensions, in teaching students the written, codified form of a language, we introduce them essentially to a body of written literature, representing the world of the past or the present. In teaching students spoken dialects, we introduce them to living, "organic" speech communities, where the linguistic heterogeneity and the rates of linguistic change within the different speech communities can be bewildering to the stranger. In selecting a written standard variety of a language, we may have little choice; we must teach the accepted written standard variety of the region. In selecting a spoken variety of the language, we have far more latitude, though here again we must emphasize the needs of the learner. In the case of British English, it might seem obvious that we must teach the dialect of educated people of the Greater London Metropolitan Area in its accepted phonological form, the "Received Pronunciation". After all, this speech variety, taught in the British public schools and popularized in recent decades by the British Broadcasting Corporation, reflects the speech of a dominant social group in a dominant geographical region in Britain, and as such carries great social prestige[1]. Surely, then, the choice is simple; a newly arrived family from Pakistan coming to settle in with relatives in a factory district of London will be taught "BBC English" and not "Cockney" English. Similarly, a family from Hong Kong newly arrived in Aberdeen,

Scotland, will be taught "BBC English" and not the Aberdonian dialect. Right? Perhaps not. Even in what might appear from a distance to be the most clear-cut situations, the teacher who is sensitive to the needs of his or her students will temper the instruction to those needs; the social and geographical linguistic variation of the world immediately outside the classroom will be introduced into the curriculum as needed to help the learner "settle into" the surrounding speech community. Even in regard to the French language, the bastion of linguistic correctness, instruction in "street French" is now considered necessary for the serious learner of the French.

These, then, are some of the considerations we must bear in mind as we select materials and design classroom activities for the conventional teaching of Celtic languages in ordinary classroom situations for normal academic purposes. If we concern ourselves seriously with helping our students to acquire near-native fluency and accuracy in a Celtic language as rapidly as possible, however, we will have to exercise considerable ingenuity. If we take on the further responsibility of helping to provide a speech community outside the classroom in which our students can actually employ the language so arduously acquired, we will be taxing ourselves to the limit, but this is in fact the problem facing the teacher of Celtic languages. Unless teachers help to provide a context for the use of these languages, instruction in the Celtic languages may well be a futile exercise and a waste of the teacher's time. We will return to this issue later.

Turning now to the immediate problems of classroom instruction, we find that the standard, written Celtic languages offer no great problems in terms of conventional classroom instruction. Celtic languages are sharply different in linguistic form from the major languages of western Europe, but the industrious student may expect to read written materials in the standard language with no great difficulty eventually. Even literature written in a non-

standard dialect may present few difficulties, especially when up-to-date reference materials exist. But what of the spoken languages? Here we must deal with the effects of at least a millenium of history. Spoken languages imply the existence of speech communities, but speech communities in the Celtic areas of Europe are usually shattered or battered communities which have withstood the gale force winds of the expanding imperial languages English and French. It has been estimated that the number of speakers of Irish in the Irish-speaking areas of Ireland who now speak the Irish language regularly in their daily activities is as low as 25,000[2]. Yet, according to a recent newspaper account of Irish-language broadcasting, there are an estimated 40,000 speakers of Irish in the greater Boston metropolitan area here in the United States[3]. Similarly, there are thousands of native speakers of Irish clustered in the greater London metropolitan area in Britain, many of whom speak Irish regularly to family and friends, a situation well described by the late Irish writer Dónall Mac Amhlaigh[4]. These speech communities, whether at home in their native areas or abroad in emigrant communities, represent the kinds of marginalized, "dislocated" speech communities so often described by Prof. Joshua Fishman[5].

If we prepare students to use spoken varieties of Celtic languages in speech communities outside the classroom, toward which speech communities do we direct our efforts? Even before instruction in a spoken variety of a language begins, the student would have to have a clear idea of the speech community, or cluster of communities, in which he or she would like to find himself/herself. Many students, nevertheless, haven't the faintest idea of which community they would like to visit. They do know, however, that they will never find themselves in the unnerving situation of having to find food and shelter at night in an area where no one speaks English (or French). On the contrary, they may find it difficult to pry loose a few words in the Celtic language in question from a local speaker of the

language, a situation so painfully described in Máirtín Ó Cadhain's "Aisling agus Aisling Eile"[6]. Teaching "survival Irish", "survival Gaidhlig", "survival Welsh", or "survival Breton" (to say nothing of "survival Manx" or "survival Cornish") could be a bizarrely unreal activity, though the students might not suspect it initially. Similarly, some of the problem situations described in Di Pietro (1987) might be hopelessly out of place -- at least in the first encounters of struggling language learners with native speakers. Similar problems exist with all communicative approaches to teaching Celtic languages. Unlike the student of Arabic lost in the Riff Mountains of Morocco attempting desperately to make himself or herself understood in local Arabic (or Berber!) before nightfall, a student of a Celtic language in a Celtic area would very likely find himself or herself in the opposite situation; that is, after an initial attempt to communicate in the local language, the local inhabitant addressed might reply in the local dialect of the language, in the standard variety of the language, or in English (or French), depending on his or her assessment of the student's proficiency in the local dialect. The student would count himself or herself lucky indeed if the local person continued the conversation in a relaxed manner in the local dialect of the language. For example, since I spoke Connemara Irish before beginning my research on Aran Irish, I was always responded to in Aran Irish, but I remember approaching a man I knew on one of the islands who was engaged in a friendly conversation with a neighbor in a very public situation in front of a shop. I approached the man, hoping to join in the conversation. Instead, the conversation stopped abruptly, and my conversational openers were responded to politely but laconically. Sensing that I was not to be included in the conversation, I politely "butted out" of the conversation, and the conversation continued its course in my absence. This situation would not be an unusual one for a stranger in an Irish-speaking area. The point is that, as teachers of Celtic languages, we

might have to prepare our students for a linguistic etiquette quite different from that normally envisioned in communicative syllabi.

Keeping these considerations in mind as we turn more specifically to the problems of teaching Irish in non-Irish speaking areas, what can we do in the classroom to foster both the learning and the acquisition of Irish, and how can we prioritize the tasks? First, Standard Irish should be taught in its written form, and students should be at least familiar with the recommended pronunciation for the standard orthography (an Lárchanúint)[7]. I suppose it is possible to imagine situations in which one might not teach the standard written form of Irish, but it would be difficult for a teacher to justify not equipping students to read roadsigns, directions, and simple literature written in Standard Irish. Another important reason for teaching Standard Irish is that it is the source of a flood of neologisms coming into the living, rural dialects via the educational system and the Irish-language broadcasting service for the Irish-speaking (and non-Irish speaking) areas, Raidió na Gaeltachta. One cannot talk about the modern world without these new terms, and people in the Irish-speaking areas take a lively interest in the outside world. As I have mentioned elsewhere[8], they are proud of being able to discuss world affairs in Irish if they so choose. To them, Irish is one of a number of small but important modern languages in the new Europe, along with languages such as Norwegian, Danish, or Czech, not a cluster of neglected, antiquated and dying dialects spoken in an impoverished rural backwater. Raidió na Gaeltachta has also helped to increase mutual intelligibility among speakers of different dialects, to the point where the youngest of listeners may no longer be able to identify the origin of many dialectally marked expressions[9], and this also should contribute to the unconscious use of Standard Irish terms in the different dialect areas. In sum, I think it entirely appropriate for the speech of learners of Irish to

reflect this "new growth" in the living language, even when conversing with speakers of Irish in the most traditional Irish-speaking areas.

So much for the standard language -- what of the non-standard dialects? First, it would be an unusual class in which all, or even most, of the students were strongly inclined toward learning a given dialect. In most cases, the class as a whole is largely neutral in terms of the dialect to be selected. In such cases, the non-standard dialect in which the teacher is most comfortable might be a good choice. Provided that the teacher makes a consistent attempt to link non-standard forms with equivalent standard forms, any increases in the complexity of the material to be learned might be offset by gains in the "naturalness" and "authenticity" of the vocal "input" coming from the teacher. The oral input of the teacher can also be supplemented in due course by the rich literature, oral and written, of the dialect area in question in printed form and on video and audio cassettes. Such material might include folklore, folk song, modern creative writing, autobiography, and descriptions of traditional life.

In those cases where the teacher has acquired only, or mainly, "school Irish", the teacher can simply use Standard Irish alone. In any case, the classroom is the primary acquisition context for the target language, and the teacher is the sole "live" source of input and interaction for natural speech in that language. Artificial though it may be, the classroom is the first Irish "speech community" that the learner usually experiences.

What of the world outside of the classroom? How does the learner relate to the world of "real" speech communities, particularly to speech communities composed of native speakers of living dialects, whether mixed communities of dialect speakers in large urban areas or small, dialectally homogeneous rural communities? In the case of those language classrooms outside of Ireland which are far from any communities of Irish speakers, the

classroom can be extended into the student's living situation in both space and time. This is especially important because students of the spoken language tend to assume the existence of an idealized speech community in which somewhere, sometime, they will exercise their newly acquired language.

Provision can be made for "language houses" on campus where students can "live" the language they are acquiring in the classroom; summer "language camps", where students can practice the language in a pleasant rural environment which reflects the natural world in which all languages are born; and at the very least, "language nights", where at least a handful of people can come together to "process" their world through their acquired language and enjoy each other's company over the years. My own experience has shown that four or five people is an ideal number for such a conversational group. If the group contains six or more people, there is a natural tendency for the group to split into two separate conversational subgroups, each pursuing a separate topic. If only two or three people are present, the burden of carrying on the conversation in a newly acquired language may be too heavy for the participants. The role of the teacher, native speaker, or near-native speaker in such a group would be to help maintain a healthy conversational flow. Stable conversational groups can exist over decades, and, according to my observation, can produce steady acquisition of both active and passive language skills. In such artificial environments, of course, there can be no question of selecting a dialect. The dialects of the most fluent speakers will tend to predominate, and the predominant dialects on any particular occasion will reflect the composition of the group on that particular night. Mutual intelligibility in the group is not seriously diminished by dialectal diversity, provided that the rate of speech of the most fluent speakers is not too rapid, and provided, of course, that individual speakers are willing to backtrack and

to paraphrase words and expressions not understood. I myself once offered to try to use Standard Irish in the conversational group to which I belong in place of the heavy Aran dialect I now speak. To my surprise, even the less fluent members of the group asked me to continue speaking in unmixed dialect. They said that they much preferred natural speech with its occasional risks of unintelligibility to a clearer but more stilted or artificial speech variety.

Returning to the conventional classroom situation, which dialect should be selected when the classroom is located near a sizable community of native speakers outside of Ireland? Such communities are typically dialectally mixed concentrations of emigrants in a large urban area in an English-speaking host country. In such cases, it seems reasonable that instruction be given in the dominant dialect of the local Irish community, and that close ties should be maintained with that community. Intermediate and advanced learners of Irish can be exposed formally to contrastive presentations of the phonological, grammatical and lexical systems of other dialects, and informally to the spoken Irish of a wide range of speakers from different dialect areas at events co-hosted with the local Irish-speaking community. One goal of instruction might be the eventual absorption of language learners into the local community as functioning members of the community.

In Ireland itself, the selection of a dialect for the classroom might be determined largely by geographical considerations. With the exception of Dublin, the nation's capitol and the home of a large population from all areas of Ireland, it might be wise to view Ireland as divided into three east-west belts, each characterized by the dialect spoken in the westernmost areas of the belt. Moving southward on a north-south axis, one would find three broad belts where the Ulster, the Connacht, and the Munster dialects respectively would each be nurtured and given pride of

place in classrooms within its own belt. Within each of the belts, one would place relatively strong emphasis on the living regional dialect in the westernmost areas, whereas an opposing emphasis would be placed on Standard Irish in the easternmost areas of the belt. The object of this scheme would be to lessen opposition (covert or overt) from Irish speakers in Ulster and Munster, some of whom tend to regard Standard Irish as thinly disguised Connacht Irish. On the other hand, it would give more legitimacy and scope to the regional dialects now cramped in their tiny "reservation" areas in the West. The people of the larger and smaller urban areas within the belts might feel better then about "adopting" and promoting a form of Irish historically associated with their region. Glór na nGael activities might help nurture forms of Irish which have a strong regional "flavor", yet which have the modernity of Standard Irish and converge in their linguistic form toward it. This "latitudinal" approach to the "spheres of influence" of the old regional dialects might even help resolve the problem of the lack of a regional constituency for Standard Irish. It has been pointed out that the Lárchanúint[7], the pronunciation recommended for Standard Irish, bears a strong resemblance to the sound system of the Classical Irish of North Connacht. If this point were driven home to the people of Connacht, and proper respect shown to the surviving dialects of North Connacht (as well as to those of South Connacht), might Standard Irish be given a better reception in the eastern areas and in the urban areas of Connacht? As for Leinster, which, of course, has lost its regional dialect entirely, there is no local obstacle to the expansion of Standard Irish, but even here the cultivation of respect for the authenticity of the surviving Connacht dialects might cast a more favorable glow over Standard Irish itself[10]. The success of the Ráth Cairn community, whose Irish-speaking population was resettled from Connemara to County Meath over a half-century ago, might be regarded as a favorable omen.

CONCLUSION

A language implies a speech community, a community which may be as small as a group of friends meeting together over the years or as large as the entire Irish-speaking diaspora. Instruction in a language implies intelligent nurturing of the language acquisition process in learners, to the extent of even helping to create speech communities for the learner. The two principal contexts of language acquisition historically have been the household and the children's playgroup. Prof. Fishman has stressed the vital importance of "home-family-neighborhood-community" in the "intergenerational mother tongue transmission" process[11].Teachers of Celtic languages as living languages must be committed to assisting in that process[12], both out of respect for the communities of people who speak Celtic languages and out of respect for their own students, who hope to have the opportunity of visiting such communities one day.

The language classroom cannot be a family, nor can it really be a playgroup, but the language teacher, like all good teachers, can be a catalyst for beneficial change in a community -- in this case, a speech community, however small. After all, the language classroom, if it is what it purports to be, is a threshhold, a place of arduous initiation, across which the candidates, once properly prepared, step into a timeless world of literature (in the case of the classical languages), into a living human community (in the case of the modern languages), or into a blend of both (in the case of modern literature and the performing arts). The role of dialects in such a community of learners is to provide authenticity and historical continuity for the learner, on the one hand, and a place of honor and a valued function for the native speaker, on the other hand. Above all, Standard Irish must be seen as complementing and

completing the regional dialects in Ireland and abroad, not as competing with them or replacing them.

Notes

1. In speaking of "dominant" linguistic varieties or "dominant" dialects, we are speaking of the characteristic speech forms of those social or geographical groups of people who are distinguished from neighboring social groups by concentrations of wealth, power, and prestige. Neighboring groups with different speech norms may orient themselves linguistically in the direction of the dominant social group or speech community. This may begin the "snowball process" characteristic of the growth of standard languages.

2. See Ó Murchú (1985), p. 29.

3. The article was published a couple of years ago, in reference to a projected hour-long weekly digest of events from Raidió na Gaeltachta to be broadcast on a radio station in Boston, with Seán Bán Breathnach as host. The projected listenership was an estimated 40,000 Irish-speakers.

4. See Mac Amhlaigh (1960). A claim for some 100,000 people in London able to speak a Celtic language is reported in the weekly newspaper Anois, 3 December, 1989. The London Association for Celtic Education is cited as the source of the figure.

5. See Fishman (1991).

6. See Ó Cadhain (1970).

7. Standard Irish is normally considered to be the written form of the language as outlined in the official handbook Gramadach na Gaeilge agus Litriú na Gaeilge: An Caighdeán Oifigiúil, published in 1958, and as supplemented -- and revised -- by the Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla, published in 1977 (cf. Ó Dónall, 1977). The Lárchanúint (cf. Ó Baoill, 1986), on the other hand, is regarded as an effort to provide a spoken standard form of the language, one which follows closely the form of the

written standard as set out in the Foclóir Póca (cf. Roinn Oideachais, 1986) but one which is ultimately based on the reference works for the standard written language cited above. Some might regard the Lárchanúint simply as the written standard Irish of the Caighdeán Oifigiúil and of the Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla "wired for sound". In fact, this whole matter is a good deal more complicated (cf., for example, Nic Mhaoláin, 1985, or Ó Baoill, 1993).

First, there are a number of changes made in the Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla (henceforth, FGB) in regard to the form of written Irish laid out in the Caighdeán Oifigiúil (henceforth, CO). Unfortunately, these changes are not conveniently listed for the reader of FGB; he/she must happen upon them while consulting the dictionary entries. Therefore, the student of modern Irish cannot be confident of CO as the authoritative canon of modern Standard Irish, nor does he/she have easy access to the revised canon in FGB. Furthermore, a number of permitted changes are mentioned in the Lárchanúint, particularly in Chapter Nine, the chapter on verbal forms. The changes involve the use of the pronouns muid/sinn in a variety of linguistic contexts, the use of the pronoun siad in an analytic verbal construction in the third person plural of the past habitual tense, the use of the future relative marker -s (permitted, but not exemplified, in CO), and the phonetic shape of the second person singular inflectional ending /a:/ in the conditional tense (for -fá/-feá). The last-mentioned change would have to be admitted as a morphological revision of the written form in CO, not simply as a straightforward phonological realization of the written form; certainly an older generation of us familiar with Buntús Cainte tapes would notice the change!

True enough, constant and careful reference is made to CO and FGB, and the changes are described as "permitted" ("Tá rogha tugtha...", etc.), but nowhere are precise references made to the authorizations. Clearly, then, the reader must rely on the authority of the

Lárchanúint itself when using such forms; the Lárchanúint, therefore, becomes de facto part of the defining canon of modern Standard Irish, along with CO and FGB.

Second, what of the status of other reference works compiled since the publication of CO? What of the English-Irish Dictionary (henceforth EID) of Tomás de Bhaldraithe (cf. de Bhaldraithe, 1959), still the most modern and comprehensive English-Irish dictionary in existence? Though written in the "Standard Grammar and Spelling" (cf. de Bhaldraithe, 1959, p. vi), the reader will notice a number of differences between EID and FGB, e.g., An Laitve (EID)/An Laitvia (FGB); sóivéideach (EID)/sóivéadach (FGB); and maidhm talún (EID)/maidhm thalún (FGB). What of the Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí (cf. Christian Brothers, 1960), the unofficial but invaluable reference on modern Irish grammar and syntax for some 35 years? What of the new Úrchúrsa Gaeilge (cf. Ó Baoill & Ó Tuathail, 1992), which contains the new forms, "agus comhúdarás á thabhairt dóibh" (cf. Ó Baoill, 1993, p. 30). As a number of scholars have urged (e.g., Ó Baoill, 1993, and Ó Ruairc, 1993), it is time to issue a revised version of CO, so that many pending questions can be resolved and the Irish-speaking public can have access to the revised canon. Meanwhile, Standard Irish, along with the traditional spoken dialects, continues to evolve.

8. See Duran (1994), p. 258.

9. See Feirtéar (1990), p. 81.

10. The "middle belt" of Irish, including both Leinster and Connacht, may have had an historical precedent in a dialect which once stretched in a wide, curved swathe from the whole area of Connacht east through middle Leinster, dipping southward through southeast Leinster, a dialect which Nicholas Williams calls "Gaeilge Gháileonach" (cf. Williams, 1994). The existence of such an historical precedent, of course, in no way affects the practicality of the "triple-belt" proposal, but it does, perhaps, lend it a little "authenticity".

11. See Fishman (1991), especially Chapters Five and Fourteen.

12. Here the teacher of threatened modern languages parts company with the teacher of classical languages and literatures, as well as with the teachers of languages that have or have had the force of an empire behind them.

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CALL With Methodical Explanations

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Work on the design of a CALL package for Irish grammar is continuing at the University of Limerick. The CALL system is organised around a dictionary, which has an object-oriented structure. The main dictionary class has a subclass for each part of speech and within each subclass there may be further subclasses. As well as having the methods of higher classes available, each subclass may have its own methods. The methods specify various properties pertaining to inflexion and points of grammar. From these methods, exercises on inflexion and other grammatical points can be generated by the system. The system can offer explanations or directions on how to determine what the particular form of a word or phrase should be. The system should be suitable for a student working alone or as supplementary material for taught courses.

KEYWORDS

Irish, CALL, explanations, automatic, object-oriented, dictionary

INTRODUCTION

Work is continuing at the University of Limerick on the design of a CALL system (MacGallóglaigh *et al.*, 1991, McElligott and Ó Néill, 1993a,b; 1994) on inflection and aspects of Irish grammar. The focus of this paper is on the automatic generation of explanations for the student. The

system is designed around a dictionary, which is object-oriented in organisation (McElligott and Ó Néill, 1993a). The approach is similar in ways to the work of Ide and associates (Ide *et al* .,1993) and modelled on an approach suggested by Pratt and Adamski (1991). The computer dictionary is based on *An Foclóir Beag* (Roinn Oideachais, 1991).

DEFINITIONS

Most Irish words are orthographically represented using 18 letters including vowels (Joyce 1920). In The Christian Brothers (1988) the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet are given, with the five vowels being subject to marking. Each letter may be lowercase or uppercase.

Some basic components are shown below:

Alphabet: {a..z,A..Z,á,Á,é,É,í,Í,ó,Ó,ú,Ú}
% no order is implied by the order of specification

Vowels: {a,á,A,Á,e,é,E,É,i,í,I,Í,o,ó,O,Ó, u,ú,U,Ú}

broad: {a,á,A,Á,o,ó,O,Ó,u,ú,U,Ú}
and (e follows a)

slender: {e,é,E,É,i,í,I,Í}
and not (e follows a)

Consonants: Alphabet - Vowels

Other symbols: {',-}

Word: $L_1L_2..L_m$ m>=1
%gives a structure for a word

where, for all i, L_i in Alphabet
$(C|V)V_1V_2C^*$
where C in Consonants, V, V_1, V_2 in Vowels

Follows e follows a in S if S = S1aeS2
where S, S1 and S2 are strings
and S1 or S2 may be null.

The primary parts of speech, together with some characteristics, are (Mac Giolla Phádraig, 1963):

parts of speech: {adjective, noun, article, verb, conjunction, adverb, pronoun, exclamation, preposition}

gender: {feminine, masculine}

number: {singular, plural}

case: {nominative, vocative, genitive, dative}

tense: {present, future, past, past habitual}

mood: {conditional, imperative, present subjunctive}

person: {first, second, third, autonomous}

noun: gender, case, number, declension indicator
% a noun has a gender, one or more cases, number and a declension indicator

adjective: gender, case, number, declension indicator

article: gender, case, number

verb: tense, mood, person, conjugation indicator, root, verbal noun, verbal adjective

declension indicator:
- noun: {1,2,3,4,5, irregular, null}
- adjective: {1,2,3, irregular, null}

conjugation
- indicator {1,2,irregular, defective, copula}

A word within a category may not have all the properties specified for the part of speech, such as, defective verbs and nouns which do not have plurals. For some verbs, there are two forms of a tense, dependent and independent. Other parts of speech also may have a choice of forms for the same set of properties. These particular details are obtained from the dictionary entry for the relevant word and override the general case.

There is also some variation on classifications and naming in grammars and dictionaries (Ó Siadhail, 1989, Stationery Office, 1968, Roinn Oideachais, 1986), for example, some authors give only four declensions. Although some words have distinct endings for dative case (in current use), for example, **lá** (day) has **lá**, the dative case tends to be one of role. However, there is often initial mutation when a word has the dative role. The accusative case occurs only with certain pronouns. Generally then, the nominative is used in this system for nominative, accusative

and dative, but there are a few entries in the dictionary with a distinct form given for the dative. In the *New Irish Grammar* (Christian Brothers,1988), the word "common" is used.

In the following is shown the forms and the properties of the article (where the article remains a separate form)

an:	feminine, singular, nominative
an:	masculine, singular, nominative
an:	masculine, singular, genitive
na:	feminine, singular, genitive
an:	feminine, singular, dative
an:	masculine, singular, dative
na:	feminine, plural, nominative
na:	masculine, plural, nominative
na:	feminine, plural, genitive
na:	masculine, plural, genitive
na:	feminine, plural, dative
na:	masculine, plural, dative

METHODS

The dictionary is organised in an object oriented manner (McElligott and Ó Néill, 1993a). Part of the class structure is indicated below

focal
methods: applicable to all words
ainmfhocal
methods: applicable to nouns

briathar
methods: applicable to all verbs
briathra rialta

methods applicable to all regular verbs

etc.

aidiacht

etc.

There is a method at the top class for determining if a letter may be lenited and a further method for leniting a word.

```
Lenitable L:letter
        L in {b, c, d, f, g, m, p, s, t}

Lenitable Word
        L2@Word <>h
                and
        ((L1@Word lenitable and
           L1@Word <> s)
                or
        (L1@Word = s and L2@Word not in
           {c,f,m,p,t,v}))
                % L2@ Word - second letter
                within the word
Lenite
   L:letter
      Lenitable L
              action : L → Lh
      not(Lenitable L)
              action: _

   Word
      Lenitable Word
              action:  L1L2..Lm → (lenite L1) L2..Lm
      not(lenitable Word)
              action: _
                      % _ no action required
```

Other classes can then use the general methods for lenition.

GRAMMATICAL POINTS

There may be methods associated with a word or set of words or class of words to deal with other grammatical points. Below is shown part of the specification of the effect of the article on the following noun. The part of speech is specified together with the subset of characteristics which apply. The class of the following word upon which the word has an effect is given together with the relevant characteristics. Each condition is specified together with the corresponding action.

The general format for specifying the effect of a word on a following word is

Part of speech$_1$ {form of word , subcategories}:
Properties$_1$
Part of speech$_2$ {form of word, subcategories} : Properties$_2$
condition
action: expression
condition
action : expression
:

where properties$_1$ is a subset of the properties of the part of speech$_1$ and properties$_2$ is a subset of the properties of part of speech$_2$ and properties$_1$ = properties$_2$. Condition is a subset of properties$_1$. Expression specifies the actions to be performed on the word (concatenation, removal of endings and so on) and is constructed from methods and Prolog operators, similar to frames (Lucas and Van Der Gaag, 1991).

Specification (partial) of effect of article on following noun
Article: number gender case
Word: noun: number gender case
singular feminine nominative

```
                    action : lenite Word
singular masculine nominative
                    action : _
singular feminine genitive
                    action : _
singular masculine genitive :
                    action : lenite Word
singular feminine dative
                    action : _
singular masculine dative
                    action : _
                            % typically the dative
                            role would be
                            determined by a
                            preposition
```

The methods used for specifying the effect of one word on another can be used in different ways. It can be used to determine the effect the appropriate forms of the words to be used or if a phrase is consistent.

Example:

Given **an bhean** (the woman),

an:

feminine, singular, nominative
masculine, singular, nominative
feminine, singular, dative
masculine, singular, dative

bhean is not in the dictionary, so the lenition is removed and the word **bean** is found.

bean:

feminine, singular, nominative

So the match between the article and the noun is:

feminine, singular, nominative

In the specification of the effect of the article on the noun, the action associated with the feminine, singular, nominative is lenition. When **bean** is lenited it gives **bhean** and hence, matches the given noun phrase. (The effect of prepositions on the noun and the article are separate and take precedence over the article and noun on their own.)

Similarly, given two parts of speech and a required condition, the forms of the words which match the condition can be determined. So, for example, given the article **an** and the noun **fear** (man) and the required condition genitive case singular, the form **an fhir** is generated. The dictionary returns the form **an** of the article and **fir** for the genitive case singular of **fear**. The rule determined by the article noun combination is applied to return **fhir**.

EXERCISES

The system can generate and correct exercises automatically. The exercises are based on the methods and the grammatical points. So, at the simplest level, there is a method for the lenitable letters. Hence, there is an exercise on lenitable letters. There are various methods for the various parts of speech and so, for example, there are exercises on forming the tenses of the verb. As just indicated in the previous section, there is information on the effect of the article on the following noun and hence, there are various exercises possible.

EXPLANATIONS

The explanations are obtained by applying the information contained in the methods and grammatical points. A simple exercise is to give the student a word and request the lenited form, for example, **bord** (the lenited form is **bhord**). The student can supply the form or request the system to return the form. In either case, the student can request an explanation. The explanation is determined from the methods:

to lenite **bord**
check
bord lenitable
check
L2 = **o** is not h
and
L1 = **b** lenitable : L1 in
{b,c,d,f,g,m,p,s,t}
word lenitable

therefore to lenite **bord**
bord → (lenite **b** → **bh**)
gives **bhord** (applying the action specified)

Check corresponds to a condition which must be matched - in this instance lenitable Word

In the example of the effect of the article on the noun there is an additional level which requires the consideration of properties. The properties of article and noun which are required are number, gender and case. The total number of properties a part of speech possesses may be greater than the number of properties used in some particular situation. A noun, for example, may also be

categorised as belonging to a declension (although such categorisation is not an essential quality of a noun).

an fhir

an

the properties to consider are
number gender and case
the article **an** matches
feminine, singular,
nominative
masculine, singular,
nominative

fhir → fir

the noun **fir** matches
masculine, singular,
genitive
masculine, plural,
nominative

the conditions common to
an and **fhir**
are
masculine, singular, genitive

with such a match
the word **fir** is lenited giving **fhir**

(the student can then, of course, request an explanation of "lenited.")

Phrases such as "the conditions common to" are predetermined, the structure of the responses is based on the application of the methods and related material. The system is Prolog based and from the properties of Prolog derive the general workings of the system (Lloyd, 1987, Lucas and Van Der Gaag, 1991).

SPECIFICATION

Although the style of the specification is formal, it resembles the approach used in grammar books. Hence, it is hoped that it will facilitate the generation of specifications suitable for processing by computer, while allowing the grammarian to use his or her more usual approach.

The explanations also provide a mechanism for testing the specifications.

SYSTEM USE

The system is developed with different kinds of user in mind. It is hoped that the system can be used by a (determined) student working on his or her own with little or no access to a teacher. It can also be used as supplementary material in taught courses. In a taught course it can serve to give as many examples and exercises as the student needs, without the time constraint caused by the class time. It can also be useful in revision during a course, either at the prompting of the teacher or as the student deems necessary.

INTERFACE

The system is being developed in a Windows environment, which should facilitate ease of use. The system is intended for use by children (from about ten years of age) or adults.

RESTRICTIONS

The system can cope with much of inflection, mutation and other grammatical points. However, in some situations to determine whether a word should undergo mutations requires semantic information. For example, on page 15 in *New Irish Grammar* (Christian Brothers, 1988),

is given **lámh duine** instead of ******lámh dhuine* since the first noun denotes part of a person. The dictionary requires to be extended to include information on semantics to allow for automatic treatment of such cases.

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TEACHING SPEAKING IN THE CELTIC LANGUAGES

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"Sheltered Initiation Language Learning" [SILL] is an innovative initial method for teaching foreign languages, aimed at creating confident and creative speaking abilities. "Its startling methodological assumptions, instructional procedures, and degree of success present a bold challenge to prevalent language acquisition theory." (Marianne Celce-Murcia, ed., 1991, Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, second edition, Rowley, Mass.: Newbury).

SILL is based in acquisition theory, but its approach, relying on "output" (production) over "input" (comprehension), is opposite to mainstream methods (see "Sheltered-Initiation Language Learning," in Applied Language Learning, vol. 4, #1-2, 1993). Instead of "immersing" students in a mass of linguistic data (which they may understand communicatively but possibly not grammatically), SILL presents an orderly sequencing of words and sentence-patterns (and, later, of grammatical detail as well). Learning five or so words at a time in a tightly incremented sequence of short lessons, each focusing on a sentence pattern (starting from "X, please," and moving on, lesson by lesson, to descriptive and narrative sentences), students gradually learn to express given meanings, without wading through masses of input.

Immersion may work well for languages like Spanish (at least when students are able to study for the many hours per week that it requires), but it is not widely practical for Less Commonly Taught Languages. While "immersion weekends" may be wonderful motivators, they are not sufficient to produce true speaking abilities. But speaking is the very definition of "knowing a language" in the mind of

most students, just as confident, creative speaking ability is the sine-qua-non of any language "revival," abroad as in the home country.

SILL sequences grammar innovatively, deferring complications until they are actually needed. By starting with masculines only to encourage initial fluency, it delays (for a few lessons) the complex explanation of eclipsis that begins most Irish textbooks. Also delayed: the copula (*is*), and conjugation of Irish (in favor of the periphrastic present with *ag*). Teachers may fear that some students will never learn the delayed difficulties. However, I have found (op.cit.), in some specific instances already studied, that SILL allows faster, more effective introduction of grammatical categories than other curricula.

For Irish and Welsh, SILL has been implemented in "Samples" of 1-3 hours (containing some "optional" lessons). They can be taught before, or along with, regular curriculum. They are supplied with instructions about the four simple "study-steps" that teachers need to follow. (For each of the lessons mentioned above, students need to: read aloud the "associations" provided for learning words (step 0); learn the words thoroughly and fluently (step 1); practice substituting different words in the sentence-pattern (step 2); and practice "Talkathon," saying sentences in different patterns, and thus practicing fluency (step 3).)

Teachers of Irish and Welsh are invited to participate (by writing to me at the address below) in an experiment to evaluate SILL formally, by teaching the "Sample" and filling out short evaluations.

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Materials Received

Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge. (1994): *Who Said That?* Dublin: CMG.
Teach yourself Irish video (2 hrs. US$25, p+p inc.). NTSC (North American) version. Suitable for adult classes or home study (introduction). Available from Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge, 7 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, Ireland.

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Contents include **Introduction: A Critical Look at the Critical Period Hypothesis in Second Language Acquisition Research** by David Singleton, **Can Late Learners Attain a Native Accent in a Foreign Language? A Test of the Critical Period Hypothesis** by Theo Bongaerts, Brigitte Planken, and Erik Schils, **Multicompetence and Effects of Age** by Vivian Cook, **Some Critical Remarks Concerning Penfield's Theory of Second Language Acquisition** by Hans W. Dechert, **Evaluating the Need for Input Enhancement in Post-Critical Period Language Acquisition** by Georgette Ioup, **Some Critical Remarks on the Phonological Component** by Zsolt Lengyel, and **Is there an Age Factor for Universal Grammar?** by Gita Martohardjono and Suzanne Flynn.

Announcements

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

- **ACTFL'96**: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Annual Meeting. 22-24 November 1996. Philadelphia, PA, USA.
- **Celtic Language Teachers' Professional Development Day.** 22 November 1996. Penn Language Center. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA. To register, contact Kara Smith at R1, Blenheim, ON, N0P 1A0, Canada or via e-mail at karasmit@village.ca.
- **NAACLT'96**: Second Annual Celtic Language Learning Conference. 23 November 1996., University of Pennsylvania. Proposals for papers should be sent to John T. McCranie, NAACLT'96, Dept. of Computer Science, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA 94123, United States of America or via e-mail to jtm@futon.sfsu.edu. Deadline for proposals is 15 March 1996.

SUBMISSIONS

- ◊ The *Journal of Celtic Language Learning* is published each autumn.
- ◊ The deadline for submissions is 15 April of each year.
- ◊ Those interested should submit four typed copies of their manuscript to Nancy Stenson, Institute of Linguistics and Asian and Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Minnesota, 190 Klaeber Court, 320-16th Avenue, SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. Keep a disk (computer) copy of the paper. It will be requested in the case of acceptance.
- ◊ All submissions should be double spaced. Articles should be 2,500 to 3,000 words and short descriptions of a program or technique should be 200 to 500 words.
- ◊ All submissions will be refereed blind by two anonymous readers.
- ◊ Comments from the referees will be forwarded to the authors together with the editors' decision regarding publishing after 15 September of the same year.